



Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber

Mike Isaac

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A *New York Times* technology correspondent presents the dramatic story of Uber, the Silicon Valley startup at the center of one of the great venture capital power struggles of our time.

In June 2017, Travis Kalanick, the hard-charging CEO of Uber, was ousted in a boardroom coup that capped a brutal year for the transportation giant. Uber had catapulted to the top of the tech world, yet for many came to symbolize everything wrong with Silicon Valley.

Award-winning *New York Times* technology correspondent Mike Isaac's *Super Pumped* presents the dramatic rise and fall of Uber, set against an era of rapid upheaval in Silicon Valley. Backed by billions in venture capital dollars and led by a brash and ambitious founder, Uber promised to revolutionize the way we move people and goods through the world. A near instant "unicorn," Uber seemed poised to take its place next to Amazon, Apple, and Google as a technology giant.

What followed would become a corporate cautionary tale about the perils of startup culture and a vivid example of how blind worship of startup founders can go wildly wrong. Isaac recounts Uber's pitched battles with taxi unions and drivers, the company's toxic internal culture, and the bare-knuckle tactics it devised to overcome obstacles in its quest for dominance. With billions of dollars at stake, Isaac shows how venture capitalists asserted their power and seized control of the startup as it fought its way toward its fateful IPO.

Based on hundreds of interviews with current and former Uber employees, along with previously unpublished documents, *Super Pumped* is a page-turning story of ambition and deception, obscene wealth, and bad behavior that explores how blistering technological and financial innovation culminated in one of the most catastrophic twelve-month periods in American corporate history.

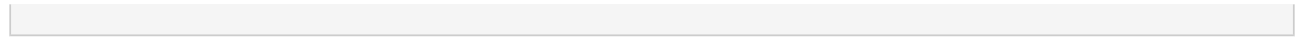
Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber Details

Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber

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Sparse Greener says

This is one most poorly written books I've read in years. I picked it up because I've always disliked Uber and thought this would be an Uber-focused version of "Bad Blood" (one of my favorite books I've read this year). It was not even in the same league. By the end I actually liked Travis more, and truly loathed the author for making me sit through 350 pages of painful drivel.

The writing is horribly self-congratulatory ("there was a New York Times reporter involved. That reporter was me" is evoked multiple times as if to remind the reader that the book can't be as bad as it seems because of the authors employer). The authors obvious insecurity comes creeping through throughout the book.

It's also full of childish errors. At one point the author says Travis has "Savant-like math skills" because he can calculate how long it will take to get somewhere in a car given the distance and the speed. I reread this 5 times, thinking it must be a joke. It was not.

A few pages later I found out why simple arithmetic counts as Fields Medal worthy: the author insists that a 1.5mbps modem is "thousands" of times faster than a 28.8kbps modem. Apparently for the author $1500/28.8 \approx 50$ is an impossibly complex math equation.

These were just two of the 11 tweet-worthy mistakes or idiocies scattered throughout the book. Some of the other egregious examples: saying all companies have a single founder, that consumer-facing companies always get higher valuations than enterprise software/infrastructure companies, or that VCs investors hope to earn a 20% total return on their initial investment "after 10 years" (not compounded annualized return, which would have made sense). I wondered at times if the author had decided to save money by not hiring an editor.

In addition to being painfully self-absorbed and full of errors, the writing is incredibly formulaic. It felt like the whole book had been written by a machine-learning algorithm trained to imitate non-fiction. The book had all the superficial traits of the genre, without any infusion of actual writing talent.

Unless you enjoy comically bad writing, avoid this book at all costs.

Henk says

The fascinating source material is not done full justice by sloppy writing and editing - Three Stars

You treat us like mushrooms: feed us shit and keep us in the dark - an investor about Uber's CEO Travis Kalanick

The real,

The first time I used an Uber was when a friend and me were stranded by a disruption of public transport on the way to Stansted airport. Our driver passed us twice because he didn't know how we looked, and we feared he just picked up an other ride due to the spike in demand and fares. But with a complete stranger (who turned out to be a ballerina from Greece) and a mother who was on her way to her family, we jointly made our flights in time. This all for around 20 pounds per person and with an interesting story to tell at home as well.

It perfectly encapsulates the idea behind the ubiquitous app.

the good...

Reading about Uber is like reading about a real life The Circle. Mike Isaac homes into the whole culture of Silicon Valley of making big bets and assertions to be noticed. How a charismatic personality,

competitiveness and ruthless determination make all the difference. Together with a disregard for legality and vested interests, seeing any challenge as something that needs to be cleared out the way, that is. The company in its start up phase felt like a supersized version of the Fyre Festival (<https://www.netflix.com/nl/title/8103...>) at times, showing the real life truth of the adage that is better not to wait for permission, but just do things and then see what the consequences are.

Of course there is a working product that clearly meets a need, it's not all bluff and bluster. Boards and investors see this, and happily give up their oversight and information rights just to get into this product. There is fear of missing the next big thing, and Travis Kalanick cleverly uses this to his advantage. He drives a culture of internal strife and competition, leading to assholes taking control all over the company. Then excessive amounts of money (\$2 billion a year on promotional expenses alone) are coupled to a minimum of oversight, with staff functions like legal, compliance, HR and even the CFO being sidelined. The WeCrashed podcast (<https://wondery.com/shows/we-crashed/>) covers basically the same happening at WeWork a few years later, indicating this is a kind of systemic thing in current day capitalism.

No wonder things go bad through this cocktail.

Bad in this instance ranges from people being murdered in Brazil and Mexico by taxi companies that want to keep grip on their markets, faking petitions and circumventing the Appstore approval processes to keep gathering privacy sensitive data from clients to combat rampant fraud.

Some of the side effects of a culture focussed on rapid growth above all else.

Content wise this book has a lot going for it.

and the bad.

Unfortunately the writing is rather poor versus how thrilling the subject matter is.

This book has quite a lot of typos and cliché sentences that make me feel like the head over heels approach Uber used to get to markets first was also applied by the author. We have unclear jumping in time and no comparison to what is happening at other Silicon Valley firms.

Mike Isaac uses big sweeping statements and has a rather bewildering focus on the length, weight and looks of the persons he describes. Overall so little of the research and talks the author must have held to unearth some of his subject matter is clear from this book, a lot just seems to be platitudes and general Financial Times headlines.

Also the author incorporates himself as a figure within the book, when his narrative doesn't have a clear added value or gives a momentum to events unfolding.

This started off as a four star read but due to the sloppy editing and clunky translation, with as low point of Oprah literally called Whitney as a last name two sentences after she's introduced, it ended at three stars for me.

Still breezed through it and this has more than a bit of Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup vibes, so an entertaining read for anyone interested in modern business and Silicon Valley.

Eric Lin says

If this book were an Uber ride, it would be an Uber Pool wending its way through the Marina on Saturday night - sloppy bros and woo girls cycling in and out.

Perhaps they slump against the window, leaning heavy. The window rolls down, Mom's spaghetti. They stagger out from the backseat, swaying back and forth behind the car as they wait to jaywalk across the street to return home. They will sleep on their dirty floor tonight, alone.

The driver has been drinking too. You can smell it on his breath. He turns to look at you, and you realize that it is Travis who has been driving you around. He tells you he hasn't been making much money driving for Uber.

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From reader reviews:

William Meadows:

Book is to be different per grade. Book for children until adult are different content. To be sure that book is very important usually. The book Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber ended up being making you to know about other expertise and of course you can take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The publication Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber is not only giving you much more new information but also for being your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship together with the book Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber. You never truly feel lose out for everything should you read some books.

Denise Barnhart:

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Bernard Taylor:

What is your hobby? Have you heard that will question when you got college students? We believe that that issue was given by teacher to their students. Many kinds of hobby, All people has different hobby. And also you know that little person including reading or as reading through become their hobby. You have to know that reading is very important and book as to be the thing. Book is important thing to provide you knowledge, except your own personal teacher or lecturer. You discover good news or update in relation to something by book. Different categories of books that can you choose to use be your object. One of them are these claims Super Pumped: The Battle for Uber.

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